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## **OBSERVATIONS**

**ON**

## **DOG BREAKING.**



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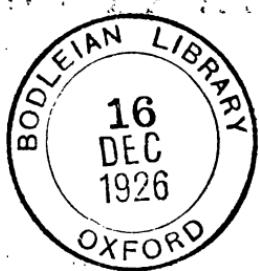
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## OBSERVATIONS, &c.

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ALL dogs that will hunt for game, that are capable of winding it at a certain distance before it rises, and will pursue it eagerly after it is on wing, may be taught to point by the method which I shall endeavour to describe. Although any dog with these requisites may be taught to point, it does not follow that terriers, spaniels, &c. will ever equal well bred pointers, and certainly there is more trouble in breaking them.

Young dogs should never be hunted where there are hares until they are perfectly steady to partridge ; they may then be very easily prevented from running them ; that is to say, in places where they are abundant, for it is in vain to attempt it where they see them but seldom.

The first thing to be done with a young dog is to allow him to hunt at liberty without any controul, until he is well confirmed in ranging ; he will at first pursue larks, or any other birds, but in a short time he will take little notice of any thing but game. He must next be taught to lie down at command, and not to move until he is touched with the hand. For this purpose a small cord, about twenty yards long, should be tied round the dog's neck, and the other end of it to a peg fixed firmly in the ground. When the dog is let go, particularly if he be a little frightened, he

will endeavour to run away, and will be stopped with a check when he gets to the end of the cord. He should instantly be dragged back, and made to lie down near the peg, by a check, but not touched or spoken to when he is down. He will get up as soon as you leave him, and will either creep after you, or attempt to escape, and be again stopped by the cord; in either case he must be dragged back as before, and made to lie down with a check. It is a bad way to stand near the dog when he is down, or to attempt to prevent him from rising; on the contrary walk away immediately and leave him to get up or not, as he pleases, always dragging him back, and making him lie down if he moves. After this has been repeated eight or ten times, he will lie still. You should then walk repeatedly round him, crack a whip at him, run at him, go some distance from him, and in short do every

thing you can (without touching him) to induce him to get up ; and if he moves but a single inch, drag him back as before. It will save much trouble and time to give this lesson so effectually, in the first instance, that nothing shall induce the dog when he is once down to move, and this may always be done in a quarter of an hour.

Most dogs are a good deal frightened by this treatment, they should of course be checked with more or less severity according to their dispositions, but unless they are somewhat awed in the first lesson, they will never lie down well, and it is upon this that the success of this mode of breaking almost entirely depends. You are now to caress the dog, lift him up gently if you cannot induce him to rise, and lead him about by the cord, one end of which must still be attached to the peg. Jerk the cord, at the same instant crying

‘Down,’ the dog will probably drop ; if he does not, it is easy to pull him down with the cord ; this done, walk round him, and at some distance from him as before, and pull him back if he moves. By repeating this several times, always leading him by the cord, he will soon learn to drop when you cry ‘Down,’ but it will be well to give him a little check at the moment you say ‘Down’ as it will make him attentive, and induce him to drop instantaneously at the word. It is easy to see when the dog may be trusted without the peg, but the long line should not be laid aside too soon. Lead him about, call to him to lie down when he is a few yards from you, and so by degrees when he is further off, always having the cord in your hand until you see that he may be trusted without it.

When the dog will drop at the word ‘Down,’ however distant he may be from

you, a cord of nine or ten feet long is to be used.

He should now be taken to a place where there is no game, encouraged to range, and practised in dropping ; he should above all be pulled back if he makes a single step after the word ' Down,' or attempts to get up before he is touched with the hand ; this is a general rule never to be departed from.

Old dogs may get up at the whistle, but it is much better to make young ones wait until they are touched. He should now be hunted every day where there are no birds. If he gets too far from you, or does not turn when you call, run after him, make him lie down, pull him back more or less as he may require it, and set him off in a contrary direction.

It is essential always to give young dogs the wind, that they may learn to quarter, and not get a bad habit of turning inward; by which they would go twice over the same ground. If they be inclined to this fault, you should get forward up wind before you call to them to turn. If on the contrary they take too much ground up wind, turn back a little when you call to them; and if they go straight against the wind without quartering at all, you must call to them to lie down, and pull them back more or less as may be required. You should always turn with the dog, and walk on a line nearly parallel to that on which he is going, inclining a little up or down wind, as he may be disposed to take too much or too little ground at turning; this will teach him to take his quarters quite through, passing you at each turn, and not hunting in zig-zags, by which the ground would be irregularly beaten.

A dog that drags a ten foot cord, (which will not impede his hunting,) and that will lie down at command, is almost as much in your power as if you held the end of the line constantly in your hand, and inasmuch as this power is great, it should be used with discretion. It is easy to check dogs that are too resolute, but when overawed they become difficult to manage and very liable to blink. It is much better to correct a fault by slight punishments frequently repeated, than by too much severity at one time, the lesson will by this means be more strongly impressed on the memory of the dog ; and by thus feeling your way you will be less likely to spoil him. Much time will be gained, and a dog will be made much more perfect by being kept for some time to the practice of quartering, lying down, at the word, and turning to the whistle, without finding game, than by seeing partridges at first without

previous education, as is the usual practice. He will more readily become obedient, because he will be less animated, and have less temptation to riot, he will quarter better, because there will be no scent to induce him to deviate from his regular course, and he will not connect the dread of punishment with the scent of partridges, which is in general the cause of blinking. All this, which is the principal part of breaking, may be done at any season, provided the weather be fine, for it is very injurious to young dogs to hunt them in the rain, or in a high wind. The dog being thus prepared before the birds begin to pair, abundance of time will be given to complete the work.

The good effect of drafting hounds when they are fed is well known; but gamekeepers, who in general know but little of dogs, usually let them all feed

together like a herd of swine. It would be much better if pointers were made to lie down a few yards from their food, and not allowed to move until they are touched. This is easily effected by pulling them back with the cord, they will by this practice, (particularly if several dogs are together and only one suffered to feed at a time,) get a lesson of obedience and self controul every day, and they will learn to let another dog pass them when they are pointing.

When the young dog has been prepared by these previous lessons, choose a fine day in the pairing season, when the birds lie well, and hunt him for some time where he will not find game, to take off (what is called by sportsmen) the wire-edge ; having made him lie down repeatedly and pulled him back, if he has appeared to be too bold, let him hunt for partridge ; taking care to

give him the wind, and not to let him get too far from you. He will probably spring and chace the first bird that he finds, follow him crying 'Down,' and although he cannot be expected to obey your voice in the first eagerness of the chase, sooner or later he will lie down. You must then pull him back gently for some distance to the very spot where he sprang the birds, if it be not too far, make him lie down for some time, and walk round him as usual. By a frequent repetition of this lesson he will chase less and less every day. Always pull him back if he does not drop the moment a bird rises, and if he be well bred he will soon learn to point: but all this should be done very gradually, pulling him but little at a time. When he does make a point, cry 'Down,' and if he has been managed according to the directions I have given, he will probably drop, if he should not; you must check him with the cord, and pull him back a

little, but not until the birds have risen, lest you should make him blink.

It is always prudent to get in front of the dog who is pointing, before you call to him to drop, if you cry 'Down' when you are behind him, it is more likely to make him blink.

If a dog springs the birds, and then drops, but does not show any disposition to point, you must pull him back five or six yards, and then make him lie down. If he still refuses to point, a case which will very rarely occur, you must watch for the moment when he first winds the birds, taking care not to be too far from him at the time, and running at him cry 'Down'; if he does not obey you pull him back smartly, and make him lie down, this will soon produce its effect. It is by these means that I have taught terriers, and

spaniels to point, which is very contrary to their natural inclination.

Young dogs should always be made to drop when they first begin to point, once down they will lie as long as you please, and will be effectually prevented from springing, chasing, or blinking, and they will soon learn to stand up when left to themselves. All pointers should drop when a bird rises, it not only contributes greatly to make them steady, but is very useful in high turnips, or in a bad scenting day when a covey is dispersed. If upon these occasions a dog springs the first bird he will generally put up all the rest, which would not happen if he were to drop at the flur.

If a dog gets too near his birds, by pulling him back he may be made to point at a greater distance, unless the fault arises from a defect in his nose. Dogs that have

been much punished for springing, or that are disposed to blink, will point at a surprising distance from the game. And this circumstance has convinced me that the distance does not entirely depend on the nose, but in some degree upon the caution of the animal. Nothing can be more absurd than to check a dog for making false points, as it arises from excess of caution, and is frequently produced by too much punishment. A young dog ought always to be hunted by himself, until he is become perfectly steady, and then it is better to hunt two young ones together, the old ones always have tricks and acquire bad habits.

It is very easy to make any dog back, you have only to pull him smartly to the spot where he ought to have remained, and then make him lie down. When two or more dogs are at exercise and one dog is

made to lie down, it should be a signal to all the others to do the same, and they should be well pulled if they do not attend to it.

A very absurd opinion prevails among sportsmen that by killing game to young dogs you will make them steady, it has in fact a contrary effect, for when a dog sees birds fall in their flight, it of course encourages him to pursue them, but nothing will make them so steady as to take birds to their point with a setting net, which may be easily done in the pairing season when you may see them lying before the dog in the green corn. Having taken a bird, I tie it by the leg to the tail cord of the net, and let it flutter and run about before the dog.

When you first shoot to a young dog, the long line should be used, the end of which should be held by an assistant at the time

the dog points, in order to check him if he attempts to run up to the falling bird, which he will probably not do, if he has been managed according to the directions I have given. It is much better not to allow a young dog to run up to the bird when it falls, although you may wish him so to do when he is perfectly made. All dogs who run up to the bird when it falls, will invariably chase more or less, and in so doing put up game. On the other hand many birds will be lost if not immediately pursued.

The best way is not to allow the pointers to move, but to have a dog of the proper kind for the sole purpose of retrieving the game ; a dog for this purpose should bring well, have a good nose, and very little disposition to hunt.

This mode of breaking pointers may be applied to spaniels with great advantage

by making them lie down, and by pulling them back when they range too far, they may be made perfectly obedient and taught to hunt at the proper distatice.

The common way of breaking pointers is to fatigue them by hard work, and to whip them when they spring or chase ; well bred dogs will generally point when subdued to a certain degree by this treatment, but many dogs would cease entirely to hunt partridges, indeed it is by these very means that hounds are made steady from feather. Dogs may be daunted by the use of the whip, but it cannot explain to them (if I may be allowed the expression) what it is they are expected to do.

If a dog is taught to drop at a word, and if this word is given when a bird rises, he will soon take the rising of the bird as the signal to drop, and by being repeatedly pulled

back gently towards the spot where he first winded the bird, it is obvious that the scent will soon become the signal at which he will lie down, and this is what is required.

All dogs are made shy by the use of the whip, some sneak away, and are not easily caught, when they have committed a fault, and others who will not bear the slightest correction cannot possibly be managed by these means. But all dogs may be broken by the cord, it will never fail to daunt the most resolute, and may be so gently used as not to over-awe the most timid.

I never use the whip on any occasion whatever, and I have taught many dogs to bring, to go into the water, and to do tricks with cards such as the showmen exhibit, by the use of the cord only. Persons unaccustomed to break dogs expect them to make a visible progress from day to day,

but animals can only be taught by a frequent repetition of the same lesson, that which is soon learnt is soon forgotten, and it is only by time and patience that an animal can be confirmed in the habits which you wish him to retain.

F I N I S.

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